

BAY AREA ATARI USERS GROUP

October 1981 NEWSLETTER Issue 12

Subscription 'til year end \$6.00

Single Copy Price \$1.00

NEW USER GROUP OFFICERS

by Dave Flory

Most of you probably know of the change in the officers on our exec. board. For any who are not familiar with this, our prior president, Clyde Spencer, has stepped back to a vice-presidential slot, with Dave Flory taking the President position. Robin Zeigler has turned over his position as Chief program librarian to Hans Hansen. Clyde Spencer is taking the primary responsibility for locating speakers, which was formerly handled by Hans.

For those of you who aren't well acquainted with me I'll briefly background myself. I've been a sciencefiction nut since I was about 10 and naturally fell into an interest in computers thru' the stuff I had been reading. My first real contact with computers was an IBM 650 which was as timekeeper for the unit in the Littauer Statistical center in the Harvard Business School. It took up a large room and had 2k of memory on a large rotating drum. We have come a long way since then, baby!!

Occupationally, I'm a law enforcer. I've been a cop for about 18 years, now running the team of men who enforce against the intoxicated driver. Even here my interest in computers shows up. I was part of a small group who did the system design on our computer assisted police and fire radio dispatch system. I also wrote a grant request which is pending now to put the cities street/accident records in a computer in a graphic display format so we in traffic enforcement can display maps of accidents of different types and thus get some objective idea of what kinds of violations are causing our accidents; at what times and where.

My major goal as your chief executive officer is to get the tutorial series we have talked of off the ground. We started Sunday with a basic Basic class at Los Gatos High. More are in the planning stages now.

Hope to see you all at the next meeting at the Gaslite Theatre in Campbell, 7 PM, Oct. 6, Tuesday. (looks as tho' we may be meeting at the Dysan Auditorium in Santa Clara soon; more on this later)

happy bytes,

Dave Flory

EDITORIAL

by Liza Loop

I heard an interesting speech last month I'd like to share with you. It was by Seymour Papert, author of the book "MINDSTORMS" and a veteran "kids 'n computers" watcher.

It seems Seymour had been talking with the New York City Board of Education, and they say it costs about \$40,000 to keep a kid in school for the normal 13 years. So Seymour asked them a question. What would you think of issuing each child a computer, not a toy, but a powerful computer with graphics and 48k of memory and disk drives and lots of software? Provide word processing and a programming language like LOGO and computer assisted instruction and data base management. The idea is to really put tools in the hands of the student and let him learn to use them as early as he can. Would that child's education be improved by, say, 5% over the course of the 13 years?

Well, since you, dear reader, are probably a computer freak, you might be tempted to say, yes, the learning process would be enlarged by at least 5% and maybe accelerated by 5%. And what would be the cost of this probable benefit? How about 5% of the current cost of educating one child, \$2,000. If you had the volume buying power of the New York City Board of Education, how much Atari equipment and software do you think you could get for \$2,000?

Seymour isn't asking "what would you think of..." anymore. He's asking, "Why haven't you already..."

Do you know anyone on a Board of Education?

BAY AREA ATARI USERS GROUP OFFICERS

CHAIRPERSON: Dave Flory

• 4029 Payne
San Jose CA 95117
(408)244-7181

SPEAKERS: Clyde Spencer

• 1714-B Marshall Ct.
Los Altos CA 94022
(415)965-9355

NEWSLETTER: Liza Loop

• % Loop Center Inc.
3781 Starr King Circle
Palo Alto CA 94306
(415)858-2034

PROGRAMS:

• DISKS: Hans Hansen
42663 Lerwick St.
Fremont CA 94538
(415)490-0175

• Clark Peterson
5931 Clydesdale Ave.
San Jose CA 95123
(408)629-3437

• TAPES: Robert Hinds
4944 New World DR.
San Jose CA 95136
(408)226-4513

TREASURER: Victor Rogers

• (408)779-0185

DOCUMENTS: Ron Guditus

• 685 Jeffreys Ave.
Campbell CA 95008
(408)378-5110

SECRETARY: Wally Hurley

• 38660 Lexington St. #586
Fremont CA 94536
(415)791-5012



ADVERTIZING POLICY

Short ads (3 to 5 lines) will be run FREE for INDIVIDUALS with PAID memberships.

Commercial Ads will run upon receipt of camera-ready copy and payment according to the fee schedule below:

Full page (8 1/2" x 11")	\$50
Half page	\$25
Quarter page or less	\$12.50

Copy deadline -the 7th of each month

Mail to: Newsletter Ads

BAY AREA ATARI USERS GROUP

c/o Foothill College

Los Altos Hills, Ca 94022

or phone Liza 415-858-2034

BAY AREA ATARI USERS GROUP NEWSLETTER

is published by the Bay Area Atari Users Group, an informal association of individuals. This group is not affiliated with Atari, Inc. or any other commercial organization. Any logos, trademarks, or company names are used either with permission or as an informal way of referring to a product or organization.

Correspondence address:

Bay Area Atari Users Group Newsletter
c/o Foothill College
12345 El Monte Ave
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

All articles are written and donated by readers. Opinions expressed in this publications are those of the individual author and do not necessarily represent or reflect the opinions of the Bay Area Atari Users Group as a whole or of any other commercial or non-commercial organization.

Please submit articles camera ready, typed or printed in 4" columns. Mail to "EDITOR" at the correspondence address.

Subscriptions (which include Group membership) are \$12 per year and entitle you to 12 newsletters. Single newsletters are \$1.

MESSAGE END EIA

A Benchmark

This article has its genesis in the purchase by a coworker of a NEC 8001 which is a very fine piece of hardware. In his first burst of enthusiasm, he ran the Interface Age Prime Number Cruncher benchmark test which was reprinted in the August 1981 issue of Interface Age along with times for a number of main frames and microcomputers. The program calculates prime numbers between 0 and 1000 and lists them on the screen. I ran the benchmark using both Atari Basic and its close relation Basic At+. I ran the benchmark in Graphics 0, Graphics 3, and with no DMA by the Antic chip by using POKE 559,0.

The times for Atari Basic were as follows:

Gr. 0	1626 sec.
Gr. 3	1181 sec.
No DMA	1114 sec.

The times for Basic At+ were as follows:

Gr. 0	1523 sec.
Gr. 3	1114 sec.
No DMA	1044 sec.

In comparison, the Apple II+ required 980 seconds to execute the benchmark. The fastest 6502 microcomputer for this benchmark was the Compu/Think MINIMAX II which required 505 seconds to execute the benchmark.

I hope that this exercise is taken with the appropriate number of grains of salt since high speed number crunching capability is about the last reason anybody should buy an Atari 800.

Robert K. Kawaratani

A's and Spaces

by Michael Haggerty

Being exposed to BASIC for so long has given me a chance to stumble upon many useful tricks. For example, try the following program:

```
100 DIM A$(100)
110 A$="A STRING OF CHARACTERS"
120 A$(1,20)=A$(3,22)
130 ?A$:END
```

Not so fantastic; BASIC simply moves the whole string over 2 places. Now change line 120 to read:

```
120 A$(2,22)=A$(1,21)
```

and RUN it. Unexpectedly, A\$ turns out to be 22 'A's! This makes sense when you realize that to transfer a string, BASIC must take the first string, one character at a time, and move it to the new string. What happens in the second example is that BASIC moves the 'A' from space 1 to 2, then moves the character in space 2 to 3--but space 2 contains an 'A' from the first shift, so the 'A' gets moved through the whole string. This phenomenon can be a pain at some times, but it can also work for you. Often it is necessary to fill a string with blanks. All we have to do now is:

```
100 DIM A$(1000)
110 A$(1,1)=" "
120 A$(1000,1000)=""
130 A$(2,1000)=A$(1,999)
```

(Line 120 is necessary to prevent an error) and the task is done with little trouble and at machine language speed.

For sale Atari 8000, 16" includes Basic and all documentation, \$650 used 2 hrs., Cassette Recorder \$39, 216" RAM \$50 each Call (415)346-3316 ---arc

GTIA IS COMING!

MORE BENCHMARKS

Quite some time ago, a member of the Homebrew Computer Club, Greg Dolkus, proposed a simple number crunching benchmark. This short program which follows will calculate the first prime number after 1,000,000:

```
10 FOR I=1000001 TO 1000003 STEP 2
20 FOR D=3 TO SQR(I) STEP 2
30 IF I/D=INT(I/D) THEN 60
40 NEXT D
50 PRINT I
60 NEXT I
70 END
```

He had reported the following execution times for various computers:

HEX-29 0.89 seconds

APPLE 5 seconds

PET 6 seconds

OSI 6 seconds

TRS-80 12 seconds

IBM 5100 23 seconds

He did not indicate whether the benchmark for the APPLE was run with integer or floating point BASIC. I have subsequently run the same benchmark on some other computers. The results follow:

HP-2000 1.5 - 3.5 seconds

INTERACT 14 seconds

ATARI 15 seconds (w/ ANTIC on)

ATARI 11 seconds (w/ ANTIC off)

As you can plainly see, our beloved ATARI does not fare very well in comparison to many of the other personal computers when it comes to number crunching. I have been told by Fred Thorlin of ATARI that we can expect Microsoft basic (when it comes out!) to be considerably faster than the currently available Shepardson BASIC. I personally have become quite comfortable with the way Shepardson BASIC handles strings and will miss giving up some of the other features it has. Oh that I could have the best of both worlds!

Clyde Spencer

SOFTWARE REVIEW

by
Dave Flory

My most recent software purchase was Atari's Asteroids. I find it to be up to the standard of Star Raiders and the other Atari produced video game programs I have used. It's not challenging in the same way as Star Raiders, but if you have an ounce of space commander in your blood you will like the Asteroids game. It is a high tension exercise in survival, with asteroids flying at you from every direction. You shoot your photon gun to destroy them and protect yourself. You also have the option of using one of several defensive options. One is SHIELDS, which allows you to raise an impregnable shield around your vessel by pulling the joystick back towards you. Another is HYPERSPACE, activated in the same way, which lets you escape into hyperspace. Only problem is you may be destroyed the instance you pop out of hyperspace. Another of the defense options is FLIP. Using this option lets you flip end for end instantly to fire at a threat behind you when you don't have time to rotate your vessel normally. Last option is no defensive mechanisms at all and this is tantamount to suicide in the early stage of your development into a real asteroid killer. There is also an alien who occasionally wanders by and takes a couple of potshots at you with his photon cannon, to keep you awake. A very challenging game, if you like to survive. I found my firing hand started to cramp up after my first 20 minutes or so of play. Good luck!!

The other recent software addition was SYNAFSE SOFTWARE's Filemanager 800. Some of you saw it at the meeting held in the Campbell Community Center. I have found it to be very versatile and extremely easy to use. It is well error protected and works well for people who are not computer experts like children. My daughter experienced no trouble in putting all of her address book on a disk with no reading of the manual. The program allows a record five pages (screens) long, with max. field lengths of 100 characters. Fields can be named anything. Files are indexed by any field on the first page of the record. One of the strongest things this program has going for it is the Synapse Software customer support. The manual says that the program sorts the file whether you enter the search parameter in capitals or lower case. The copy I got would not do so. (about 100 of these copies got out) Before I had had the prog 2 days I got a call from the Campbell Computer Center saying Synapse was recalling them. I was given a number to call & told that if I called and gave my serial number they would replace my disk. This was on a weekend. Before I called Monday I got the mail with a replacement disk. Woops! It wouldn't load. I called about 2PM, and the NEXT day got a disk that worked with the bug gone. Now that's sudden service. Would that more firms had the ability or desire to support the user this way. The program will hold about 500 records consisting of names, addresses, phone numbers and a comment field or two, on a mini-floppy disk.

for the mid-month meeting.
Questions and answers as usual

Central Campbell Computer
Store.

Tuesday October 20th
7 pm

Tuesday October 20th

BASIC
the author's of Sheppardson was as
Our speaker will be one of

Central Campbell Computer
Store)

(that's 1/2 block from the
Campbell Ave, Campbell

7 pm

Monday October 5th - 6pm
MEETINGS MEETINGS MEETINGS



Gary Chang
2265 Deborah Dr. #1
Santa Clara, Ca 95050

BAY AREA
ATARI
USERS GROUP

Foothill College, 12345 El Monte Road
Los Altos Hills, Ca 94022